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TESTIMONY

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 19, 2008

Senate Chairman McDonald
House Chairman Lawlor

H.B. No. 6452 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION

Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of the essential civil liberties and individual rights of the citizens of Connecticut. I regret that I cannot appear before you in person as I have in the past. I live in Stamford. I am employed as General Counsel of the Stamford Urban Redevelopment Commission and I maintain a small private law practice.

I urge you to support and pass Raised Bill #6452. This bill will clarify that victims of discrimination because of their *gender identity or expression* have the same protections as every other citizen in our state.

Though small in number transgender people are integral members of our society. We work in businesses (large and small), in academia, on factory floors, in operating rooms and court rooms. We are nurses, doctors, lawyers, managers, artists, research scientists, and politicians. We are in schools, in theaters on airplanes and standing next to you in the grocery store checkout line.

Transgender people face serious discrimination in the workplace, housing and public accommodations. Too often transgender people are fired the moment their employers learn of their background; targeted as they try to find a place to live; asked to leave restaurants, hotels, stores, medical facilities and educational institutions; and are subjected to embarrassment, public humiliation and even physical harm. This discriminatory and hateful conduct exists because of a lack of education and understanding and it flourishes because of homophobia and hysteria.

As an attorney practicing law in Connecticut I have represented a number of transgender individuals threatened with the loss of their jobs because they decided to transition (change their gender identity and/or expression). Prior to the year 2000 every one of those clients lost their jobs. On January 31, 2000, I filed a petition with Connecticut's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities requesting a Declaratory Ruling confirming that as a matter of law existing statutory prohibitions against discrimination based on sex includes discrimination of transgender people. On November 9, 2000, the CHRO adopted such a Declaratory Ruling.

The Declaratory Ruling has helped. Unfortunately most people and employers in our state are not aware of the Ruling and a few choose to disregard it. By passing HB 6452 you will make the law in Connecticut explicit and uniform.

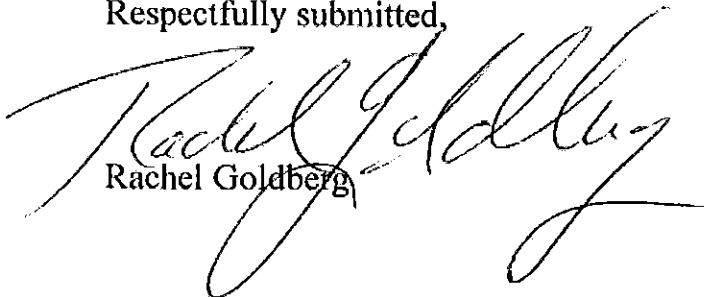
This new century has seen business leaders begin to understand the importance of diversity and recognize the value of their transgender employees and customers. Today more than 350 private sector employers (including 153 Fortune 500 Companies) have added "gender identity and expression" to the internal HR policies. That list includes many important Connecticut companies such as Aetna, The Hartford, Pitney Bowes, Xerox, UBS and RBS.

Colleges and universities also understand the importance of eliminating discriminatory injustice towards their transgender employees and students. Here in Connecticut Yale, Wesleyan and Connecticut College have added *gender identity and expression* to their policies.

Nearly seven (7) years ago I became the first employee of the City of Stamford to publicly transition on the job. It is my good fortune to live and work in a City where performance and professionalism is the relevant standard. Almost without limitation people with whom I interact in the performance of my job have been professional, accepting and/or supportive. These people are politicians (local, state and federal), republicans and democrats, judges and lawyers, doctors and nurses, public and private sector employees, members of the press, consultants, contractors and ordinary citizens. HB 6452 is necessary because my experience is in sharp contrast to the experience of too many others.

Please support and pass Raised Bill #6452, An Act Concerning Discrimination.

Respectfully submitted,



Rachel Goldberg